

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **SINGAPORE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL REVEALS ATTITUDES AND KEY INSIGHTS ON PACKAGING WASTE IN SINGAPORE**

*Increased consumer education, enhanced recycling infrastructure and a rethinking of product packaging will be key to achieve zero waste in packaging*

**Singapore, 2 August 2022** – Singapore Environment Council (SEC) today launched the ‘Unlocking Opportunities for Sustainable Packaging in Singapore’ report, aimed at uncovering insights to better understand the current consumer attitudes around packaging and packaging waste. The study also seeks to identify the opportunities for more effective packaging waste management in Singapore. Conducted in collaboration with KPMG, the report underlined the urgent need for businesses to explore more sustainable options for packaging, while increasing consumer education to raise awareness of local recycling capabilities.

In 2021, Singapore generated a total of 6.94 million tonnes of solid waste. Just over a quarter (1.82 million tonnes) of this consisted of domestic waste, which contributed to over 11 million kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent (KgCO<sub>2e</sub>) via incineration. This is equivalent to the emissions from a dumpster truck traveling 352 times around the circumference of the earth. The study sought to uncover opportunities for Singapore to rethink the traditional linear packaging systems and practices to improve recyclability and enhance sustainability, as the nation works toward its zero-waste goal.

### **Consumers have positive attitudes, but are price sensitive**

According to the report findings, consumers have a positive attitude towards adopting sustainable behaviours, with 95 percent of respondents indicating that they are inclined to purchase a product that has sustainable packaging. Despite this attitude, however, more than one in two consumers (53 percent) will only purchase sustainable packaging if it does not cost more, indicating that price is still the top consideration in purchase decisions. In fact, 20 percent of respondents reported that price is the only factor as to whether to purchase a product with sustainable packaging.

However, the sustainability of a product’s packaging was a major consideration affecting customers’ purchase decision. When considering their options, more than half of respondents cited factors such as the ability to recycle and dispose the packaging and its environmental footprint.

Convenience is also a key driver in getting Singaporeans to improve their consumption habits in order to reduce their negative impact on the environment. The top challenges that deter

consumers from recycling include the effort needed to wash and clean recyclables (23 percent), the uncertainty of what can separate recyclables from other waste (21 percent) and bringing recyclables to the recycle bin (15 percent). When asked if they will actively participate in a take-back scheme, an overwhelming 80 percent of respondents cited convenience and accessibility of the collection points as an important condition.

### **Potential for reduction in packaging, but greater education is required**

Interestingly, the study revealed that overpackaging is a major concern among consumers, with 70 percent of respondents believing that there should be a reduction in packaging material for most of the products that they buy. This insight should encourage businesses to rethink product packaging and embrace more eco-friendly options such as minimalist packaging. This can present an opportunity for businesses to save costs, which can then in turn be passed on to customers.

When it comes to recycling, greater efforts towards consumer education to improve the recycling rate seem to be needed, with seven out of 10 consumers not fully aware of what materials can be recycled. Over half of respondents cited the insufficient information on sustainable packaging and its benefits, which could explain the lack of motivation for choosing sustainable alternatives. This is further exacerbated by the lack of clear labelling, with 78 percent of respondents stating that they are unable to discern the recyclability based on the information found on the packaging.

### **Nurturing a recycling culture**

Consumers believe that the top three solutions to raise awareness on how they can recycle or manage their waste better include educational campaigns (26.3%), improved recycling infrastructure (21.8%) and compulsory eco-labelling (21%).

Beyond consumer action, the report also includes upstream solutions for businesses to encourage the shift towards producing more environmentally friendly packaging and enabling more streamlined processes in waste disposal. Establishing criteria for ensuring that packaging is designed for reuse and materials used is reduced, along with eco-labelling certifications can bring material and cost savings for businesses. Innovations to support the circular economy, such as product-as-a-service or leasing models to reduce waste or the collection and proper treatment of used packaging may also be the solution to support Singapore's zero-waste goal.

“In 2021, 523,000 tonnes, or 1.8 billion dollars' worth, of domestic packaging waste was thrown out in Singapore. As Singapore moves towards a Net Zero future, packaging waste will be one of Singapore's top waste streams of concern. With seven in 10 consumers not having a full understanding of what materials can and cannot be recycled, consumer education will be paramount in addressing the issue. Our study also revealed that government initiatives

will have to be complemented with deliberate corporate action and innovation in order to address waste management, and set Singapore on track to achieving sustainability in the packaging industry,” says Isabella Huang-Loh, Chairman, Singapore Environment Council.

“With over half a million tonnes of domestic packaging waste disposed in 2021, packaging waste remains a complex challenge in Singapore, and one that will require collaboration across multiple stakeholders to overcome,” Jen Teo, Executive Director, Singapore Environment Council, added. “Our study on packaging waste is in support of Singapore’s Zero Waste Masterplan and shift towards more sustainable production and consumption. By shedding light on consumer attitudes and behaviour, we hope to raise awareness and spur both businesses and consumers to reduce packaging waste.”

“With growing climate awareness in Singapore, consumers are now more conscious about the environmental impact created by packaging waste. Therein lies the opportunity to shift them towards more eco-friendly packaging to lower waste and minimise carbon footprint along the value chain. However, the high price of such packaging remains a deterrent for consumers who may be willing to make the switch. Over half of them surveyed in SEC’s and KPMG’s latest study cited price as their main purchase consideration. Hence, in the long term, achieving commercial viability and price parity with products of other materials will be key challenges for the industry. It may take collective industry effort to boost private and public education, even as supporting policies such as sustainability labelling are developed, alongside green innovations and cost sharing mechanisms,” said Cherine Fok, Director, Sustainability Services and KPMG IMPACT, KPMG in Singapore.

The report drew findings from two separate surveys that garnered over 1,015 responses. The demographic profile of respondents ranged from different household types, occupational statuses, ages, and income levels.

**-END-**



### **About Singapore Environment Council**

Established in 1995, the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) enables businesses in their sustainability journeys through its globally recognised environmental certification programme under the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN). In line with the national targets outlined in the SG Green Plan 2030, SEC focuses on raising public awareness on sustainability issues and fosters capability and capacity building through Public Private People (3Ps) partnership. As a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO), SEC is approved under the Institution of Public Character (IPC) which extends tax exemption to donors.

For details, please visit <https://www.sec.org.sg>

### **About KPMG**

KPMG in Singapore is part of a global organisation of independent professional services firms providing Audit, Tax and Advisory services. We operate in 144 countries and territories with more than 236,000 partners and employees working in member firms around the world. Each KPMG firm is a legally distinct and separate entity and describes itself as such. KPMG International Limited is a private English company limited by guarantee. KPMG International Limited and its related entities do not provide services to clients.

For more information, visit [kpmg.com.sg](http://kpmg.com.sg)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/kpmg-singapore](https://www.linkedin.com/company/kpmg-singapore)

### **For media enquiries, please contact:**

#### Singapore Environment Council

Mr Gilbert Ong

Head, Marketing Communications & Outreach (Sustainability)

Tel: +65 9876 0310

Email: [gilbert.ong@sec.org.sg](mailto:gilbert.ong@sec.org.sg)

#### Finn Partners

Mr Jareth Cheng

Senior Manager

+65 9006 8387

Email: [jareth.cheng@finnpartners.com](mailto:jareth.cheng@finnpartners.com)

#### KPMG in Singapore

Ng Huiwen

Communications Manager

KPMG in Singapore

M: 91511877



E: [huiwenng1@kpmg.com.sg](mailto:huiwenng1@kpmg.com.sg)

Jeanie Lee

Associate Director, Marketing & Communications

KPMG in Singapore

M: 91053957

E: [jeanielee@kpmg.com.sg](mailto:jeanielee@kpmg.com.sg)